

WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE

This activity teaches participants that a braced core will keep them more stable in situations where their balance might be jostled. In this activity, participants are partnered up. One partner will challenge the other's ability with little pushes and shoves. The partner being challenged will play the role of Lucy Goosey who has almost no backbone or the Mountain Man who remains immovable. Success is to be the Mountain Man, unmoved by the little shoves and pushes. Participants will learn a way to stay balanced under challenging conditions by using good core stability. When Push Comes to Shove is fun, social, and interactive, and it gives participants a good sense for the value of core stability.

Benefits »

- Participants experience *loosey-goosey* posture and its effects on their balance stability.
- Participants experience core-stable mountain posture and its effects on their balance stability.
- Participants and instructors interact with each other in hands-on, fun, and memorable ways.

Set It Up »

No props are needed, but do let them know ahead of time that you or their partner will be giving some of them little pushes—call them *perturbations*. It's such a nice word. The activity is voluntary, of course. They should watch a demonstration with you and a volunteer first.

How to Do It »

Demonstrate both the loosey-goosey and mountain scenarios outlined next. Tell them you'd like them to take their pushes standing up. However, it would be easy to do a seated version of these ideas. Demonstrate taking perturbations seated, if that would be more suitable for your group. For seated versions, have participants sit at the edge of their chair. This will make the perturbations more effective.

The Start

- Partner up participants by counting them off 1, 2, 1, 2; or let them pick partners themselves. If appropriate, have them stand up. Arrange for walkers or sturdy chairs to provide balance support for the Lucy Gooseys and the Mountain Men. If there is an extra person, that person will be your partner.
- Have the partners designate one to be the challenger who will do the pushing and shoving and the other to play the roles of Lucy Goosey and the Mountain Man.

The Moves

Introduce Lucy Goosey

- Participants stand beside a sturdy chair or with a walker, feet shoulder-width apart. Have every Lucy become loose all over. Cue them to stand totally relaxed and slumped. You've used this posture before, so they can probably find it easily.
- Walk up to one of them and demonstrate a small shove against one shoulder.
- Can the group see that from even your gentle shove, the whole torso reeled backward, with a bit of a twist?

- Say, “It didn’t take much of a shove, did it?”
- Now they should try it. Have the Challengers give their Lucy Goosey a firm, gentle shove on one shoulder and notice what happens.
- Do it again and observe again.
- Push them again from the front, the side, and even the back. Push at the hip, too. Always use little shoves. Watch, observe, and let them learn.



Challenger Meets the Mountain Man

- Now the Lucys will turn into the Mountain Man. Cue them to stand tall. Their shoulders should be over their hips, abdominals braced, and spine lifted. Cue them to keep their knees soft and feet parallel, shoulder-width apart.
- Ask the Mountain Men to take in a deep breath.
- As they exhale, cue them to draw their shoulder blades back and down while they push their arms down toward the ground. Cue them to imagine that with their exhalation they are planting themselves into the earth—humph!
- When they have blown all their air out and look stable, have the Challengers give their new partner a firm, quick push on one shoulder.
- Ask, “How’d that go? Any difference?” Discuss the outcome.
- Get them to do a few more perturbations, pushing from the front, side, and back and at the hip.
- Watch, observe, and let them learn.
 - Ask them which character would do best in a crowded mall.
 - Ask what makes them stable. (It’s the braced torso, soft knees, aligned posture, and determination.)
 - Are they beginning to sense the value of core stability?
 - Partners switch roles and repeat the activity. Both partners will learn from the experience this way.



Lucy Goosey Goes to the Beach

An alternative to When Push Comes to Shove is to pretend that they've all gone to the beach as their Lucy character for a party. Lucy Goosey has been sipping piña coladas and watching the palm trees swaying gently in the ocean breeze. Soon they'll become the palm tree.

- ⦿ Participants can stand with their walkers or sit at the edge of their chair.
- ⦿ Tell them they're going to become the palm trees.
- ⦿ With Lucy Goosey palm trees, everyone sways with no core stability. Their forearms can be the palm branches that sway in the breeze. Keep the arms low (arms too far overhead can be a fall risk because they may sway too much). Have the trees sway left. Have them sway right. Torsos stay loose.
 - Cue them to pay attention to how this feels, especially to their back.
 - Ask that they remember these sensations.

Lucy Switches to Iced Green Tea

- ⦿ Maybe some of the sways might have felt a little too loose? Try a different style.
- ⦿ Suggest that they've decided to wise up and switch to a nonintoxicating beverage, such as green tea.
- ⦿ Now, everyone assumes the Mountain Man posture and then begins to be palm trees again. Have every palm tree sway left, then right.
 - Ask them to tune into these new sensations.
 - What was different from the Lucy Goosey sways?
 - Did their backs take the swaying a little better? (Probably.)

Keep It Safe »

Before anyone does any pushing, demonstrate what you mean a few times. Remind them to be gentle with their perturbations—quick, firm, but gentle little shoves. Always provide adequate balance support. They should be able to use their walker in front and a sturdy chair behind, or be near a handrail. The activity will benefit them whether they watch or participate—let it be their choice.

Live It »

Core stability helps participants every day in many ways. A stable, strong core helps steady the body against all the little perturbations that life seems to toss its way. In everyday situations, it helps to steady them against everyday simple perturbations such as turning the head while walking (have them try that), swinging the arms, or little missteps.